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THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY

THE
REAT OPPORTUNITY

BY

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NOTE

THESE pages were written during the summer while hostilities were still in progress, and but for difficulties inseparable from war-time conditions, would have been published at an earlier date. Since they were finished, one of their joint-authors has accepted a public appointment outside the United Kingdom, which has necessitated his withdrawal from the House of Commons.

E. W.

G. L.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION - - - -	I
THE BUSINESS OF POLITICS - -	3
I. HEALTHY NATIONALISM: ON WHAT IT DEPENDS - - - -	5
MOTIVES OF OUR SOLDIERS - -	5
TRUE NATIONALISM - - - -	7
A WIDER ALLEGIANCE - - - -	9
FORCE OF RELIGION - - - -	11
VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE - - - -	13
NATIONAL UNITY - - - -	15
II. BEFORE THE WAR • - - - -	16
POLITICAL INSTINCT - - - -	17
TRADITION OF PUBLIC SERVICE - -	19
ATTACKS ON LANDOWNERS - - - -	21
AGRICULTURE - - - -	23
TRADE UNION POLICY - - - -	25

	PAGE
III. THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT - -	27
A SECOND CHAMBER - -	29
THE HOUSE OF LORDS - -	31
HONOURS AND PATRONAGE - -	33
CONGESTION OF PARLIAMENT - -	35
FEDERAL SOLUTION - -	37
FEDERAL SOLUTION - -	39
THE CIVIL SERVICE - -	41
THE CIVIL SERVICE - -	43
IV. RECONSTRUCTION: 1. ECONOMICS - -	44
ECONOMIC POLICY - -	45
NEED FOR NEW METHODS - -	47
IMPERIAL PREFERENCE - -	49
LEAGUE OF NATIONS - -	51
POSITION OF TRADE UNIONS - -	53
POST-WAR TAXATION - -	55
TAXING CAPITAL - -	57
A DANGEROUS METHOD - -	59
V. RECONSTRUCTION: 2. AGRICULTURE - -	60
DECLINE OF AGRICULTURE - -	61
CHEAP FOOD - -	63
EFFECT ON CULTIVATION - -	65

CONTENTS

ix

PAGE

V. RECONSTRUCTION: 2. AGRICULTURE (*contd.*)

EFFECT ON CULTIVATION	-	-	67
CORN PRODUCTION ACT	-	-	69
NATIONAL SECURITY	-	-	71
FARMERS AND LABOURERS	-	-	73
VILLAGE LIFE	-	-	75
A NATIONAL POLICY	-	-	77

VI. RECONSTRUCTION: 3. HOUSING: DRINK:

EDUCATION	-	-	79
HOUSING	-	-	81
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE NATION	-	-	83
PROHIBITION AND LIBERTY	-	-	85
CHARACTER OF PUBLIC-HOUSES	-	-	87
OBJECT OF EDUCATION	-	-	89
TRAINING IN CITIZENSHIP	-	-	91
EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY	-	-	93
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION	-	-	95
TEACHERS AND RELIGION	-	-	97
PLEA FOR UNITY	-	-	99
SERVICE AND SACRIFICE	-	-	101

THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY

INTRODUCTION

THE last few years have witnessed changes of thought and practice which in more normal times would only gradually have been evolved in half a century. There is hardly a corner of life, public or private, into which has not penetrated the imperious summons of war. We are still standing, as it were, too close to the picture to judge truly of all that the war has painted upon the canvas. We need time and distance to gain correct perspective. Moreover, the painting is still incomplete. Yet, making the necessary allowance for unfinished work, it is certain that refusal or inability to recognise the forces that are involved can only lead to unreality and error.

The war has been a stern critic and reformer of modes of thought and ways of life. Confronted with reality, much that had stood for real in days of peace has been

of us will demand of everybody the exercise in abundant measure of those qualities that can only rest securely on the foundations of real conviction. There is no great difficulty and no great virtue in speaking your mind once you know what your mind is. The ordinary person, and the ordinary Member of Parliament, often hesitates to cross the Rubicon because he is not convinced of the worth of what lies beyond.

The whole nation is determined to recreate and restore its life in such a manner as to make it more worthy of those who have paid the price of its preservation in the last four years. It is impossible that the new-found singleness of national purpose should be again lost in the clash of class or individual selfishness. All that is worthy in the nation revolts against the thought that its citizens should return to find their daily lives the standing negation of the ideals of liberty and justice for which they went out to fight. Only in so far as our philosophy is able to meet the challenge of the times, and secure achievement by enlisting in the services of peace the ideals and self-sacrifice of war, are we likely to be able to safeguard and make effective the victory that we anticipate.

I

HEALTHY NATIONALISM: ON WHAT IT DEPENDS

It will be the duty of the future historian to explain what it was that induced some five million men, of their own accord and uncompelled, to place their lives at the free disposal of their country. The menace to their homes was remote and indirect, and scarcely realised by the majority. Nor is that wonderful rally to be explained alone by the innate love of adventure which impels men to follow strange enterprises in unknown countries. Such motives had their influence, but the real cause lay in the natural and spontaneous revolt of a people, bred in the principles of justice, liberty, and fair dealing between weak and strong alike, against the doctrine of might, as exemplified before their eyes in the German treatment of Belgium.

Orators who speak eloquently of the love of liberty are often ignorant or unmindful of its origin. The contribution to the cause of liberty made by the great

thinkers of Greece and Rome was indeed inestimable, but it is at least doubtful (and the writer would put it a good deal higher) whether the principles on which civilisation has been reared, and of which the British are used to think they have been the peculiar guardians, would have been likely apart from the Christian dispensation to win the allegiance of the world. These principles in this sense religious, men cherished, and forgetting their lineage, identified them with the civil society to which they had given birth, and which in turn has been corporately associated with their maintenance and protection. When these principles were attacked it was thus rather by instinct than conscious reasoning that men eagerly responded to the country's call in their defence. And so it was that, deep answering to deep, they were stirred.

"And died (uncouthly most) in foreign lands
For some idea, but dimly understood,
Of an English city never built with hands,
Which love of England prompted and made good."

It is this spirit of generous nationalism which we would foster and make the natural vehicle of a more complete philosophy.

Let us define more clearly for what this spirit stands, and what we mean by it. We do not mean the triumph of national aspirations to the destruction of international

law; for the law of nations is in itself an affirmation of the claims of nationalism, and of its rights in the world system. Still less do we understand by nationalism the encouragement of aggression and that attitude of mind conveniently expressed as Jingoism.

We mean, rather, to express the belief that we can best perform our duty to the world by discharging adequately our duty towards our own people first, and that before our race can successfully win acceptance for its ideals by the world it must demonstrate their value by its own experience. No country can hope to exercise moral influence upon the world at large unless its own policy reflects the ideals it sets out to preach. Had Turkey, for example, instead of the United States, proclaimed its advocacy of the cause of humanity and the smaller nations, that cause would not have been materially advanced. Similarly, if we desire that Christianity should influence world statecraft we must first show that it influences our own. British ideals of liberty would hardly in past years have exercised so wide an influence on other countries had not our own people first been endowed with free institutions.

Practical nationalism will therefore in-

8 HEALTHY NATIONALISM

sist that as political and social physicians we show our capacity to heal ourselves before we attempt to heal others. If we achieve this we need not doubt that we shall be contributing effectively, to the general betterment of world conditions. For this reason we believe that the attempt in some quarters to discredit national feeling, in order, as it is supposed, to gain strength for cosmopolitan internationalism, proceeds from a radical misunderstanding of human nature. So far from healthy nationalism being inimical to the international ideas which many hope are to play an increasing part in the new world order, it is in fact the only foundation on which they can be reared. The nation is as truly the foundation of internationalism as the family is of the nation.

Speak to a man of his obligations to the human race, he must needs interpret your appeal in terms of personal experience, whether of country, home, or family. Just as a rope is built out of many separate strands, so the life of every human society is raised upon a whole series of vague but vibrating local patriotisms and emulations peculiar to itself. These cover the affections a man feels for his family, for his town or county, for the people who speak the same dialect as himself, and embrace

all the ties which bind men to the associations of work and play in daily life.

Hence it follows that it will be by according the fullest possible recognition to the narrower and more immediate loyalties that we must seek to create and maintain in health the wider allegiance—on the one hand to the Crown as the embodiment of national unity, and imperial purpose; or, on the other, to the rightful claims of internationalism.

In this connexion the following extract from a letter from an officer serving in France may be of interest. He says:

“ Take any hundred Englishmen: what does ‘ England ’ mean to them? To, perhaps, one it means the British Empire; to about a dozen it means Dorset, or Norfolk, or London; to the other eighty-seven it means just their family, or village, or Balham, or Putney. That’s why the county regiments have always fought like tigers in this war, because, day and night, the men remind each other unconsciously by allusion, reminiscence, or suggestion, of their own particular England. They are always, by virtue of the mere fact that they are ‘ Dorsets ’ or ‘ Durhams,’ in a state of highly-wrought-up patriotism. Therefore, if you want these men (who never will, these thousand years, get really excited about any of your big catchwords) to fight

10 HEALTHY NATIONALISM

for you, foster the back-garden spirit, the village spirit, the county spirit, for all you are worth."

If this is as true as we believe it to be, the nationalism that we advocate must be able to appeal to this spirit, and win, through its appeal, the acceptance of those principles of mutual service which are the condition of all ordered liberty. All classes must be brought to wish to give service to their country for the honour which that service gives. The mainspring of the country's effort in the war has been the conviction that it was directed to the vindication of great principles. It has been willing to count no cost so long as it could feel assured that the high aims with which it undertook the war had suffered no degradation. The lesson of this is obvious. Men will give their best, the more readily for an end that is greater than themselves. Their gifts can take forms as various as their circumstances, but the truth is of universal application. We have already discussed the influence which nationalism at its best, supported by the more intimate loyalties of life, is able to exert in this direction. There are other moral factors of even greater strength, among which religion is the most powerful, and the State will do well to recognise the fact.

We are not referring here only to the Church of England, or pleading for any particular theory of "Establishment," a term applied—often with only very partial acquaintance with its meaning—to the present relations of the Church of England with the State. Important as this connexion is from the side of the State, for which it provides the opportunity of giving corporate and official recognition to the Christian religion, and unjust as we believe to have been the recent Act disestablishing and disendowing the Church in Wales, we would' here argue the question in relation to all the Christian Churches without distinction.

Religion brings a new value to humanity and to human beings, as those for whom the great sacrifice was made on Calvary and lives for which so great a Person once saw fit to pay so dear can never again be counted cheap. On this ground we are convinced that even from its own point of view the State should strive to afford all material and moral support to religious forces, of whatever kind, operating within its borders. They, on their side, must act in season and out of season as sharp goads to the conscience of the nation, and fearlessly draw attention to matters that belie the nation's Christian profession. It is not

the duty of religious leaders to determine the exact remedies for the social evils they denounce, for this task would generally demand a greater degree of particular knowledge than they are likely to possess. But it is their duty constantly to remind the nation that Lazarus is lying at the gate, and that his presence there is a standing reproof to national complacency. Especially is it in their power to inculcate into the minds and hearts of those they influence the responsibility of the service of their fellows. It cannot be too often emphasised that the lodestar by which we must steer our course must be insistence at all times and in all quarters upon the responsibility of service. By great numbers this service is already freely given, and many more are in a position to do the same. But we have earlier stated our belief that it is difficult, and often impossible, to expect recognition of this obligation from those of our countrymen whose lives are an unrelieved struggle for existence. As has been truly said, it is idle and inconsiderate to praise a view to a blind man. So it is unreasonable to expect men to evince deep interest in the ideals of the British Commonwealth so long as the conditions of their own lives are in perpetual contradiction to them. On this ground therefore as well as upon that of

the intrinsically sacred value of human life, apart from all other considerations, the State in our view is bound to take every step that it wisely may to secure a reasonable standard of life for all its members.

It could hardly be said that our pre-war conditions in fact corresponded to this ideal. Moreover, the approach to it was darkened by conflicting counsel. In all quarters of the national life a malign spirit had seemed for some time to be at work, sowing broadcast the seeds of division upon a soil that suspicion had previously prepared. There was a wellnigh universal tendency to lay stress upon the causes that appeared to divide men, to the detriment of those other causes, more profound, by which they are united. As men lost sight of the conception of national unity, the holders of wealth and property, resentful of taunts and insults, were tempted to grow careless of the duties inseparable from ownership. On the other hand, the less fortunate of their fellow-citizens turned unjustifiably, but not unnaturally, to the easy belief that their own progress could only be effected at the expense of other sections of the community. The demagogues who fanned the flames of discontent came to be no more trusted than the more stable but short-sighted politicians who vainly sought to abate them. The

result was that Parliament and people could only keep in touch, or a Government remain in power, by the advocacy of political panaceas or the employment of methods tending inevitably to corruption and the debasement of public life. These ill-results were not only attributable, nor were they confined, to the political side of the nation's life. In the economic sphere, both of industry and agriculture, we believe that everyone who is in a position to form a judgment now realises the dangerous path down which we had strayed, and the economic dependence that was being prepared for us by foreign countries.

The outbreak of war restored to its rightful place the forgotten doctrine of national unity and security. Realising their danger, it was not surprising that ordinary people were loud with reproaches for the false political prophets at whose door they laid their own unpreparedness. Nor were the reproaches undeserved. For years before the war politicians had, with certain rare exceptions, appeared to have their attention fixed rather upon the necessity of preaching the party rather than the nation's gospel. Preoccupied with riding the whirlwind which their own shortcomings had unloosed they had lost sight of the fact that no appeal could really expect to win

permanent results that was not the outcome of a passionate belief in a coherent faith. It is just because the war effort of the country springs from, and has once more made articulate, the country's faith, that we must learn from past experience and profit by the lessons war has taught.

II

BEFORE THE WAR

BEFORE attempting to suggest a more excellent way of dealing with the many problems arising in the national life, it is worth examining in greater detail what the actual position of the country was before the war.

The contrast between the history of the United Kingdom and that of other Continental nations during the nineteenth century is not sufficiently accounted for by the explanation that the United Kingdom was the first to start out upon the road of political development. That such was the case is no doubt true. It is also true that in consequence, and while other nations were still enmeshed with internal difficulties, the United Kingdom was able to turn its attention to the securing of a predominant place in the markets of the world. But this difference of history was itself the natural outcome of the distinctive characteristics of the race. Chief among these may be placed the gift of political instinct, which first produced representative institutions, and has since shown the way in

which to work them. The reality of what may be termed, in its broadest meaning, the political sense of the nation may be tested by the success with which it has built, and is perpetually building, the structure of new ideas on to old foundations. From this source springs the steady clash of political argument and difference in the home and market-place. This in its turn forms opinion, and it is just because nine people out of ten have some opinions of their own that they are always ready on every subject to criticise Government and Parliament, which are supposed to be responsible for giving them effect. No better instance of what may be called the political sense of the nation can be advanced than its constant refusal, in face of great temptation, ever to forget the necessity of maintaining that maritime security of which instinct and tradition were the parents.

Popular feeling in political matters has been affected by that love of fair play which is a pre-eminently British quality. How many Governments have been replaced because the ordinary elector, with rough-and-ready justice, thought it reasonable to "give the other side a chance"! It is this principle of fair play and no favour, colouring so strongly the atmosphere of British sport, which underlies much of the demand

for a greater equality of opportunity, and for a higher standard of life for all the State's citizens. Indeed, so strong is this feeling in the nation that it is only by its combination with a certain faculty of sound judgment that the British people have avoided being easily, or at least permanently, led at the chariot-wheels of unsupported theories. They are, for the most part, naturally reluctant to proceed to extreme measures until all other methods have been exhausted, and this patience has been one of the contributory elements to that British respect for law and order which has always attracted the attention of foreign countries. The ready obedience accorded to the sign of a London policeman is symbolic of the extent to which we recognise order as the foundation of national existence. We believe that this orderly feeling suffered a considerable shock by Ulster's threat of armed resistance as a result of the passing of the Home Rule Act, and the ordinary Englishman, with only partial appreciation of the cause underlying Ulster's action, was either inclined to condemn the adoption of a course that ran counter to one of his most cherished instincts, or else to draw general deductions from it which presaged no good for the stability of society.

Respect for law and order, however,

would never have sufficed alone. It was only in alliance with the traditional love of individual liberty in all its bearings that progress could be achieved. Initiative, developed by dislike of unnecessary State interference, a firm conviction that on the whole a man is the best judge of his own affairs—those have been the conditions in which the growth of the British nation has been fostered. Of the same quality has been that love of adventure which has given us most, if not all, of our successes in the field of colonisation. It is this same mentality which should be the driving force after the war to relieve the nation at the earliest possible moment from the clutch of the Controllers.

Another valuable legacy of the past is the survival of a strong tradition of public service. In certain quarters it is fashionable to deplore the continued unpaid discharge of public duties, such as those of local magistracy or local government. The value of these services to the State is great; they may properly be regarded as the practical recognition by those with leisure at their disposal of the responsibility of service, and it will be in the highest degree unfortunate if it should ever be thought necessary to remove this opportunity from them.

There existed also before the war a wide field in which were merged many public, semi-public, and philanthropic forms of service. There is no need to recount the voluntary services rendered to the State in connexion with work—social, remedial, or educational—the value of which it would be impossible to overestimate. The mere cumulative result of these was considerable. When war came it was through this spirit of public service that the nation was enabled to invoke aid from all quarters in supporting the manifold strain that war imposed.

To a nation in possession of such characteristics—political sense, respect for law and order, spirit of adventure, and generous devotion to the public service—all things, indeed, are possible, and it is difficult to condemn too strongly the action of leaders, political or other, who, with this array of noble qualities before them, deliberately chose to make appeal to the baser instincts which it is possible to awaken in every individual. In the years immediately before the war true political discussion had been largely superseded by violent abuse of certain sections of the population. The owners of landed property were held up wholesale to public obloquy, with no attempt to distinguish between individuals meriting condemnation and those who were making

their contribution of personal and unpaid service to their country. There were, indeed, many evils to provoke just indignation, and these will only be remedied by genuine zeal for better things. Eloquence, too, is apt to be exuberant, and it is difficult to paint democratic posters in other than broad and simple colours. Yet, after making every allowance that charity demands, the conclusion is inevitable that such methods hindered rather than helped the cause to serve which they were adopted, and that their adoption has left a legacy of mutual suspicion and mistrust, of which we have had ample proof, and of which we do not yet see the end. It could, indeed, hardly be expected to be otherwise. An appeal was made to men and women perpetually faced with the struggle for existence. It was designed to enlist their hatred and envy for political purposes by fostering the belief that their poverty could be prevented by the simple expedient of taking somebody else's money. It is no wonder that such a platform won elections: but such methods will always create more national evils than they cure.

Religious institutions as well as classes found themselves the object of attack. For whatever reason, social prejudice, *odium theologicum*, political unpopularity, it was

decided that the Welsh Church was to be disestablished and disendowed. History accordingly was distorted, arguments were produced and the requisite passions aroused by all the means known to oratorical art. The parliamentary history of these events shows that the legitimate co-operation of different sections of opinion was rapidly degenerating into what is popularly termed log-rolling. No political theory can readily or satisfactorily justify that alliance of the Liberal party with the Irish Nationalists by which the United Kingdom was brought to the verge of civil war, and as a result of which Parliament witnessed the strange spectacle of Roman Catholic members supporting the spoliation of money devoted to religious purposes.

Meanwhile there were other matters to which the time and energy spent upon destructive propaganda might have been more usefully directed. For half a century or more the State had been unwilling to take any part in the organisation of industry or agriculture. During this time it had been the policy of successive Governments to leave all organisation except that of national defence to individual enterprise, and to assume that any undertakings which failed of their own resources to weather the whole force of

world-competition had no value to national life. The result was that agriculture declined and industry assumed forms that increased the wealth of the merchants at the expense of the producers and wage-earners.

In the last forty years before the war no less than four million acres, which under the plough had not only yielded food for the nation, but work and wages for a large rural population, had been let down to grass. Where five men had found employment one now sufficed, with the inevitable result that wages remained stagnant and millions of the rural population left the countryside which could no longer support them, and crowded into the towns or took their young manhood overseas. Nothing short of a world-war has sufficed to expose the wasteful tragedy of this neglect and the folly of a system under which England abandoned to others the mature fruits of the nurture and education which had been given to the rising generations of the countryside. In industry the neglect of the State produced evils no less serious. We had been taught to care more about the volume of our trade than about its character, and found equal satisfaction in a thousand pounds' worth of goods exported, irrespective of whether these were re-exports or whether

British labour had taken its full toll in work and wages out of their production. We had been content to sacrifice our production for the sake of our merchant wealth, to test the value of our purchases by their price rather than by the amount of wages which our workmen had earned from their production. More and more had we become a mere assembly-point for goods wholly or partly manufactured abroad, or producers for overseas markets financially dominated by foreign capital and directed by foreign brains.

The war has shown us that, apart from other disadvantages, national independence itself has been endangered by the degree to which vital industries had been suffered to fall under the direction of foreign influences. It has also revealed the extent to which we had allowed control of our own raw materials to pass into the hands of trade rivals. Even where we had a monopoly of these, we were still content that they should be exported from the Dominions to foreign countries on the same or even better terms than to England, while industries dependent on their supply languished and workmen skilled in their use lost employment and either emigrated or swelled the overcrowded ranks of unskilled labour in English towns. We were taught that it was cheaper so, and

the workman himself, too often compelled by low wages and casual employment to regard his every penny, was driven blindly to support that very system of cheapness of which he was the unconscious victim. The surplus of unskilled labour and the sharp fluctuations in the course of industrial employment consequent upon this State neglect had already begun to lead to grave social and political evils. The inevitable result was to be seen in the policy of the trade unions, whose leaders were indeed able, by intensive agitation, to secure a minimum rate of wages for their men when employed, but were utterly impotent to provide the employment which alone could qualify them to receive these wages. Labour leaders were therefore increasingly driven to advocate a policy of limitation of output in order that the employment available should be as widely shared as possible.

Such a remedy could only aggravate the real disease, while not a few labour leaders were conscious of the vicious circle in which they moved, and recognised the real causes of the evils that beset industry. But their parliamentary representatives had fatally joined hands with the political and other forces that placed exchange before production, and were consequently powerless to give real assistance to the cause of the

workers and producers whom they represented. Political debate introduced confusion where clarity of judgment was imperative. Happily, there are signs that the days of blind allegiance to economic dogma on one side or the other are now numbered, and that a problem which demands in greatest measure cool consideration from all quarters may no longer be obscured by the clouds of party controversy.

III

THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

THE proverbial saying that every people gets the government it deserves is sound doctrine. It implies that the machinery of government and the institutions through which it is carried on are of real importance, and that it is within the power of those concerned to model machinery and institutions after their particular requirements.

In any democratic system it is of cardinal importance that the main institutions of society by which popular desires are made articulate should command that respect which is requisite for stable government. At the present time the Crown reposes firmly upon the universal recognition of the public spirit and self-devotion of its wearers, and upon the appreciation of the unique and unifying function that it is able to discharge as the personal object of imperial loyalty. The position of the two Houses of Parliament evokes more discussion. The political struggles between the two Houses are now past history, but their cessation has

28 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

failed to produce an agreed settlement. The whole question would receive a new orientation if the changes in the method of government of the United Kingdom, to which we shall make reference presently, were made effective. But for the present the problem remains unsolved, the existing constitution of the House of Lords being professedly distasteful to one section of political opinion, the existing powers that it can exercise distasteful to another. A Committee has recently made suggestions for reconstituting the membership of the House of Lords on the foundation of election. Its present hereditary character no doubt offends the doctrinaire tenets that have been the legacy of past Whig supremacy, and it is a task of no great difficulty to make a popular case against it. Yet the test by which old institutions must be tried should be severely practical, and it should be determined, not only whether in actual working the personnel and action of the present House of Lords has been imperfect, but whether it is possible to replace it by anything more generally satisfactory. In spite of all the clamour that has been raised against it, the independence of the House of Lords is an asset not lightly to be discarded when it is increasingly necessary to vindicate and strengthen genuine independ-

ence in Parliament. But the governing consideration must be the discovery of a solution which will command general public confidence. It may well be that modern opinion, with its faith in elections as means for securing representative results, would be unwilling to extend this confidence to a body that did not repose, at least in considerable degree, upon an elective basis. Though it is clearly undesirable to create an institution which is likely to derive from its elective qualities the right of competition with the House of Commons, it is quite possible to make such reforms as should win a wide measure of assent without destroying the historical character and composition of the House of Lords, and with it the qualities and traditions that distinguish it from every other Second Chamber in the world. The other side of the matter is even more important. The familiarity of the arguments on the merits of single or double chamber government, and the absence of any obvious constitutional disasters since the passing of the Parliament Act, incline people to treat the matter as one of only secondary importance. Constitutional affairs, except in their very broadest outlines, are never likely to arrest the attention of ordinary people whose time is taken up with their own concerns. The results of

30 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

mistakes in the constitutional sphere are often delayed, and the responsibility for them is not always clear.

The vice of the Parliament Act is that it ignores and denies what has been the real secret of the successful working of the British constitution. It would never have been possible for the publicists to find its chief title to respect in the fact that by virtue of being unwritten, it was continuously able to adapt and mould itself to the changing conditions of the day, unless this flexibility had been supported and controlled by the essential historical balance of the three estates. It is this balance that the Parliament Act has dangerously impaired by putting it within the power of one portion of the Legislature to insist on any change, however fundamental, without the consent of the other constituent elements which together form the repository of power.

It might be argued that in the twentieth century no great weight need attach to objections of this nature, which might seem academic and untrue to the principles of direct popular control. Such a position, however, premises that the popular assembly by reason of its election is necessarily and always representative of those by whose votes it has been created. This assumption

cannot be substantiated, nor does it gain support from the present place occupied by the House of Commons in public estimation. It is as little true that an elective assembly is necessarily on all subjects representative of its electors as it is that an hereditary assembly cannot in fact be representative, even although it owes its existence to no elective process. It is necessary therefore to recover the balance which is the condition of good government. To this end the relations existing between the two Houses should be revised—by such modifications, if need be, of the constitution of the Upper House as will secure to it public confidence without destroying the valuable characteristics that it embodies, and by making provision that the country may take assurance that no *fundamental* change (subjects which could be easily defined) shall be carried through without reference to the judgment of the electorate. It is not claimed that this solution would be other than imperfect. But it is a necessary result of the unwisdom of lightly embarking upon a written Constitution, and would minimise its evils.

The future of the House of Lords is not unlikely to be considerably affected by the constitutional development of the House of Commons. Regard must be had to the

32 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

extent to which the House of Commons is tending to become a legislative assembly registering the executive decrees of Government. Unavoidable as this probably is in time of war, and to a great extent even, as will be shown, in time of peace, it is to some degree affected by the position of Members of Parliament themselves. They are paid annual salaries—unless they decline to take them. On the other hand, they are subject to the recurring burden of election expenses. The inevitable result of this is to increase the power of the party machine in the House of Commons, by making it more difficult for members to vote according to their own judgment against the declared party policy. For with the modern tendency of Governments to make all votes on Government business into votes of confidence, members are placed in the false position of being compelled to choose between recording their vote, against their better judgment, in favour of the Government, or, on the other hand, voting against the Government with the knowledge that, if they are successful in the division lobby, they are likely to expose themselves to the double liability of loss of salary, and what is in effect a financial fine in the shape of the expense of an election. Apart from this, there are good reasons for

reverting to the older constitutional practice by which members were free to vote without feeling that their votes involved the fate of the Administration. Arguments advanced in debate might then have greater effect on the final shape of legislation than they do now, and both arguments and legislation would be likely to improve accordingly. The present system is hostile to independence, and is perhaps, more than any other one thing, responsible for the diminished respect in which the House of Commons is coming to be held.

There are certain other dangers which for the sake of the well-being of our public life it is well to recognise. Nothing but harm can accrue from continuance of a state of things in which, by all political parties, honours of different kinds have been made the subject of almost open barter in return for a substantial contribution by the recipient to the party funds. Honours and rewards should be the well-merited expression of a nation's thanks to those who have served it well. Indiscriminate distribution of such things makes public scandal, and honours improperly gained or unworthily bestowed are no longer honourable. Patronage in all its forms is the Achilles' heel of all democracies, and in the interests of the Crown, which is the

34 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

fount of honour, and of our public life, which is vulgarised by the present system, we must admit the danger and take whatever steps are necessary to guard against it.

Consideration of the form and qualities of government as it is to-day suggests reflections on the future. It is quite possible to have the best form of government imaginable, but to find its opportunities of usefulness hampered and impaired by the work that is placed upon it. The strongest camel cannot carry more than a certain load.

As soon as the war is over the pressure upon the time of Parliament will be overwhelming. The increasing interest of all classes in questions of social reform, the addition of several million electors to the national registers, to say nothing of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the national life, which the change from war to peace conditions will necessitate, will all throw an immensely added burden both upon our legislative institutions and upon Government departments. The domestic congestion is not all. The war has brought to the front imperial problems of the first magnitude, political, constitutional, financial, economic, which will claim early consideration. The Indian proposals are already before the country, and will need to be the subject of the fullest parliamentary

discussion. Of these and of many others concerning the Dominions, and hardly less far-reaching, the solution is not likely to wait indefinitely upon our convenience. The Dominions will be anxious that they should be decided in consultation with ourselves. Yet if for lack of time we are unable to give proper attention to them, and the Dominions proceed to settle them without us, a unique opportunity will have been neglected, and we shall have only ourselves to blame for the result.

Even before the war Parliament, in order to cope with the legislative proposals laid before it, was compelled to be in almost continual session. In spite of this, the delay in dealing with private bills caused justifiable irritation in the country, and it had been found impossible to avoid for some time past the necessity of introducing one expedient after another for the limitation of debate in order to secure the transaction of public legislative business. In an interesting examination of the subject a few years ago,* it was pointed out that Parliament between 1900 and 1909 had passed 318 Acts in 276 days, upon which the writer makes the comment that no deliberative assembly can work at this rate unless it can be dis-

* *An Analysis of the System of Government throughout the British Empire* (Macmillan and Co.).

36 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

suaded from debating the measures that it passes. He concludes his argument with words that are even more true to-day than when they were written: "There is something to be said for government by an autocrat, and there is something to be said for government by a deliberative assembly. But there is little indeed to be said for government by an assembly which is not permitted to deliberate."

The continuous session of Parliament has reacted most unfavourably upon the work of all immediately concerned, whether Ministers, members, or public offices. Ministers are compelled to spend too great a proportion of their time in the House of Commons answering questions and meeting criticism, when they should be engaged in guiding the departments for which they are responsible, and their permanent officials lack the necessary respite which an autumn adjournment was designed to afford, in which to prepare proposals for the consideration of Parliament. Members of the House of Commons, compelled to spend their time in London, find it increasingly difficult to keep themselves in touch with their constituents and abreast of what they are thinking, and consequently tend to represent less truly the real wishes of the people. The result has been an excessive

strain upon the whole machine of government, a deterioration in the quality of administration, and damage to the public position of the House of Commons. We think that these are serious evils, and the certainty that they will be gravely aggravated at the close of hostilities suggests that extensive constitutional changes may be necessary to overcome them. The difficulty that confronts any Government, and most of all a Government staggering under the responsibility of a world-war, is that the country generally is not conscious of the causes of the evils we have referred to, but only of the evils themselves, and, with its eyes properly concentrated solely upon the task of victory in the field is not only uninterested in questions of constitutional reform, but would be likely to show impatience and irritation at being invited to consider important proposals affecting it. None the less we believe that it is the duty of the Government to deal with this question, and to anticipate a situation of which the difficulties will be only accentuated by delay.

The solution which would seem to meet with the most general approval is that which is known as the Federal solution. The name is obviously inaccurate to this extent, that, while Federalism has generally implied the surrender to a central authority

38 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

of powers previously vested in separate geographical units, the particular proposals to which we refer depend upon the devolution to England, Scot'and, Wales, and Ireland, of certain legislative powers now vested in the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster. This scheme has frequently provoked hostility among certain sections of the Unionist party as being merely an *ad hoc* and an opportunist remedy for the Irish Home Rule dilemma, and has suffered accordingly. We are only here concerned to say that this is not the case. It must be clearly understood, so far as they affect Ireland, that the translation into effect of such proposals must depend upon the actual Irish situation. Recent events have made two things certain. First, that few responsible persons, however sympathetic to legitimate Irish aspirations, would be prepared to recommend any political changes without at least reasonable certainty that these would not be made the instruments of a more intense hostile agitation. Second, that public opinion would refuse to sanction any proposals so repugnant to the Ulster population as to require force to bring them into operation.

It is not here proposed to discuss the Irish question. Its difficulties are manifold, and the statesman is tempted to

believe them eternal. If they are ever to be overcome, it will not be by any mere making of laws alone. It may well be that laws have the smallest part to play. Still, if by a reform necessary on general United Kingdom grounds it be possible to provide Ireland with such powers of domestic legislation as may rightly be conceded to her without impairing that unity of the British Isles which is essential to the strategical and political safety of the country, it is a further argument in its favour. The broad justification for such a policy lies in its promise to provide a cure for the evils which we have sketched above, and we should desire to see its adoption on these grounds, apart from those connected with the Irish difficulty. It is not proposed that the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster, consisting as it does of King, Lords, and Commons, should devolve any but purely local powers to the suggested local legislatures. Responsibility for such matters as justice, defence, foreign affairs, the central administration of economic policy and finance, would remain, as now, in the hands of the Parliament at Westminster. It would probably also be desirable to retain centrally industrial legislation. But apart from these there are a host of legislative functions, not vitally affecting the

40 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

interests of the United Kingdom as a whole, whose confidence to local assemblies would immensely relieve the United Kingdom Parliament. On the one hand, more adequate time and study could be devoted to the consideration of matters affecting the collective destinies of these islands and the Empire; and, on the other hand, local assemblies would be in a position to have a more intimate and efficient control of affairs which were especially their own. We have said so much because it is evidently essential to appreciate the added burdens that are likely to be thrown upon the Government of this country, and to give it such form as may enable it to discharge its task.

The need of making the Government machine efficient does not imply, however, the desirability of indefinite extension of its field of operations. It has been necessary during the war to impose a system of Government control over nearly every department of the country's life. The necessary restriction of individual liberty and official interference have been accepted with surprising tolerance and good temper, because the sense of the nation has recognised their reason and necessity. But although war conditions are not likely to terminate with the cessation of hostilities, and in consequence it is likely that an

abnormal degree of Government interference with the affairs of daily life may for some time be unavoidable, it would be a dangerous misjudgment of the national temper if it were thought that this denoted affection for such a system on its merits.

There is yet one subject vital to good government which is apt to escape the attention of observers. We have previously, in reference to the qualities of British public life, commented upon the splendid characteristics of our Civil Services. They have drawn recruits from the ablest men of all ranks in the State, men of the highest integrity, endowed with the most honourable spirit of public service, have filled our Government offices. • It is safe to say that no country in the world has been so ably, so worthily, and so disinterestedly served by its Civil Servants as England has been during at least the last two centuries. It is a matter of vital concern to the Government of the whole Empire that this should continue to be the case. But there is a danger to-day that, if things are allowed to remain as they are, the Civil Services of the State will cease to attract the same quality of public servant as in the past.

During the last decade or more the great commercial enterprises of this country have realised more and more the value of enlisting in their service the same class of

42 MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

man as that which has entered the offices of the Government. The ablest of those who have passed through a Public School and University education have now before them an alternative of choosing a life in a Government department or a life devoted to the promotion of the interests of some great financial or industrial business. Each have their special attractions: the former the wide interests, unostentatious influence, and eventual distinction that public service offers; the latter the scope for originality of effort, the acumen and the wealth that successful industry affords. But with the growth of heavy taxation, the increased cost of living, and the gradual, if unfortunate, decrease in the value attributed to public distinctions, the attractions of the Civil Services are scarcely holding their own in comparison with the opportunities open in finance and industry. A few years ago it would have been difficult for a business house to tempt a Civil Servant of any standing to abandon his position, experience, and career for a business life. To-day this is by no means the case, and the State is constantly losing some of its most valuable public servants in this way.

We do not believe that this need be so. There will always be cases in which Civil Servants will feel that their particular

talents would find greater scope in business. But the association with world events that falls to men working in the service of the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office, or the Treasury, to say nothing of the honour which all are conscious that service brings, will not fail to attract the best men to those duties if only the State will make the material conditions of that service adequate. Although the cost of living has gone up by leaps and bounds of late years, and the standard of life has risen, the State has done little to increase the salaries of its servants to meet these circumstances. If public service is to remain clean, uncorrupt, disinterested, and intelligent, this question must receive attention. It is absolutely essential that it should not be overlooked when the task is undertaken of achieving a settlement of such matters as have been here discussed. We have sought to show their effect on the machinery by which Government is conducted, and the need of wise reform if that machinery is to endure the strain that will be thrown upon it. It will be not less important that they should be handled expeditiously, and the way cleared for Parliament with renewed energy and better hope to address itself to the work with which it will be confronted.

IV

RECONSTRUCTION: 1. ECONOMICS

THE immediate task awaiting us after the war will be in essence economic. The huge loss of wealth incurred during the war must be made good, and the annual debt charges of some £350,000,000 met. Simultaneously, many proposals, essential to social reconstruction, but involving very large financial outlay by the State, will be made, and will demand satisfaction at the earliest possible moment. In April last the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave what may be considered a conservative estimate by which he calculated that the annual post-war budget would be somewhere about £650,000,000. This figure is likely to be materially increased. Employment in agricultural and industrial pursuits will have to be found, not only for the majority of the men and women now so engaged—for it seems probable that a large number of those women who have become accustomed to work as wage-earners during the war will desire to continue as such after the war—but for all the additional labour to be

released from the army. It is necessary to recall that before the war, when the number of workers seeking employment was smaller than it will be in the future, low wages and recurring periods of unemployment were regular features of our industrial life. The problem, therefore, will be far greater than any with which we have previously been faced, and failure or even serious delay in solving it is likely to bring the gravest social and constitutional results. The penalty of failure might easily spell revolution. It behoves us, therefore, to face the situation boldly, to learn from the general experience of the world in relation to economic matters, and to be prepared, if need be, to adopt new methods to meet new difficulties. •

It is generally admitted that the necessary employment, on which ultimately the financial and social stability of the country must depend, can only be found in a phenomenal increase in the total productive output of the country. To assist us in obtaining this increase we have a wide extension of what may be termed the machine power of the country—for much of the plant and power specially set up for the output of war munitions can be converted to the purposes of peace production. We shall also have a large amount of skilled labour

46 RECONSTRUCTION: ECONOMICS

available. As against these advantages we have to recognise that the immense and probably permanent increase in cost of labour, by money wages or reduction of working hours, will compel us to organise both our production and our control of markets in an entirely different manner to that prevailing before the war, if we are to meet the fierce competition of other countries similarly engaged in seeking the trade by which to give employment to their wage-earners. On the one hand, it will be necessary to develop large-scale or bulk production, in order to reduce the cost of manufacture by extended output without increasing the strain upon those employed. On the other, we can no longer afford, whatever the apparent or immediate advantage to the consumers, to give the wage-earner of other countries free entry into our markets, where his own markets remain closed to us. We are utterly unconcerned with the rival merits of one fiscal dogma over another. We are concerned only with repairing the results of a world-catastrophe, the circumstances of which were not in the minds of either Cobden or List when they wrote their books. It is more probable that if they had been called upon to face the circumstances of to-day, they would both have

found themselves in more substantial agreement upon an *ad hoc* policy than many of their respective followers.

To those, therefore, who dogmatically rule out one economic expedient as being hostile to a League of Nations policy, or another as involving "war after the war," we have only one answer to give—namely, that our first duty and our chief consideration must be to provide the greatest measure of regular employment at fair wages for all our people. We do not believe that there is anything in the League of Nations policy that need involve failure in making this provision, or that could rightly be thought to preclude national tariffs, if such an end could only be bought at the price of poverty and civil strife at home.

With this sole object in view, it will surely be the duty of the State to take such measures as will ensure to our industries the first call upon those abundant supplies of raw material in the Empire which have been developed by the enterprise and at the expense of the people of this country. Without a plentiful supply of these materials no employer can offer regular employment or give fair wages to those that he employs. Similarly, just as it would have been impossible to carry on the war successfully without a great deal of State control, so

48 RECONSTRUCTION: ECONOMICS

it will be impossible to recover from its effects without State organisation in economic policy. Some measure of international rationing of raw materials and facilities for transport is likely to be necessary after the war, and much will depend upon how long the war continues. But, subject to this general consideration, we believe that it will be the duty of the State to take such measures, whether or not they involve resort to tariff expedients, as will provide the widest markets for the sale of British products. We can no longer afford to allow a foreign State to obtain possession of our raw materials by subsidised competition, and then to close its home markets to the products of British labour. Just as England in the sixteenth century took successful steps to meet the aggression of the Hanseatic League by the protection of her industries, so the no less exceptional circumstances of to-day call for the organisation of the productive strength of England to meet the nationally organised competition of other great industrial countries.

The experience of war has united opinion on at least one point, and that is that industries essential to the security of the country must be protected and maintained against foreign competition by State action. The attention of the public has been par-

ticularly drawn to certain key industries whose necessity to war production made them the object of special attack by Germany in the years before the war. But we believe that the number of these key-industries is in reality much larger than is supposed, and once it is conceded that the industries of the Empire must in all their stages be so safeguarded as to ensure them the utmost measure of development, with the double object of increased production and of self-protection in the event of war, it will be found that little remains of the old *laissez-faire* doctrines of the nineteenth century.

The common defence of the Empire by all its constituent parts, the recognition that the interests of each are bound up with the security of the whole, has brought clearly to the minds of the people of this country that they are likely to derive as great advantage from standing together for the purposes of peace as they have done from co-operation for the purposes of war. It is realised in England, as it has long been in the Dominions, that the retention of fiscal autonomy by each component unit of the Empire not only does not preclude, but indeed may be rightly supplemented by, some system which will enable the Empire to speak with a single voice in economic negotiations with foreign Powers.

It is being argued, however, in some quarters, that a policy of Imperial Preference, even if essential to the reconstruction of our trade and to the provision of employment for the wage-earners here and in the Dominions, is hostile to that League of Nations policy for which so many look as the one solid gain to be derived from the sufferings of the last four years.

In order to justify the claim that Imperial Preference is hostile to a League of Nations, it would be necessary to assert that a League of Nations is to exert its jurisdiction over the domestic as well as the foreign concerns of its constituents, and that the maintenance of any tariff regulations by any of them is inadmissible. We believe that such a contention would not only display a complete misunderstanding of the whole League of Nations policy, but if persisted in would go far to make the realisation of such an ideal impossible.

In the first place, tariffs are to many of the nations concerned absolutely indispensable adjuncts to national finance, as well as to national trade, and could under no circumstances be abolished. It would therefore be fatal to the wide inclusion of nations to assert that tariffs are in themselves barriers to membership of a League of Nations. In the second place, any claim

that a League of Nations was to intrude its authority into the domestic affairs of its constituents would in itself be equally fatal to success. It is obvious that the United States would never allow, nor would anyone suggest, the interference on the part of any international authority in the political or fiscal relations existing between those domestic units—Georgia or California for example—that compose the Union. On an exactly similar analogy, therefore, we should deny that a League of Nations could exert any jurisdiction in regard to any domestic arrangements that might from time to time be agreed upon internally as between the several States that constitute the British Empire.

Any attempt to extend the authority of a League of Nations to the internal affairs of any sovereign unity must inevitably result in the shipwreck of a great ideal. The test of sovereign unity in this matter, as, indeed, in all international matters, is only to be found in the channel employed by any series of States for communication with its neighbours. The number of States spoken for by any single Foreign Minister is the number of States that properly constitute the national or imperial unit. Just as the whole of the United States, the Austrian and the German Empires, com-

52 RECONSTRUCTION: ECONOMICS

posed in each case of a series of independent States, bound to one another by varying fiscal, constitutional, and political ties, are represented collectively before the world by one Foreign Minister, so a single ministerial authority represents and speaks for the whole British Empire. The mutual relations between the different States contained in the single unit of the British Empire, and thus jointly represented before the world, are, and must be, domestic and internal, and consequently fall outside the jurisdiction of any supra-national authority. Any confusion of thought on this basic fact would, we fear, be fatal to the progress of a League of Nations policy.

Not less important than the fiscal re-organisation we have referred to is the position of trade unions in relation to industry. The attitude of capital generally, as well as of both great parties in the State, has been one of scarcely veiled suspicion of the trade unions of England. That party which, for electioneering purposes, allied itself to the representatives of organised labour could hardly be in real sympathy with a system so definitely hostile to the Cobdenite principles on which they based their trade policy, and allowed themselves to be driven where they might have led. The Tory party, on the other hand, whose

economic creed was entirely in sympathy with trade unionism, failed to inspire any confidence in trade union leaders, and contented themselves with resisting the extremists' proposals which emanated from that body.

The war, in this question no less than in others, has taught all parties much. Labour leaders, with few exceptions, have proved that they really represent their organisations in giving disinterested and patriotic support to the national cause. It is to be hoped that the days when recognition of trade union leaders as spokesmen in industrial disputes was refused have gone, and that their right to speak in all matters affecting the industries they represent will continue to be accepted as a matter of course. But, if this is to be the case, they too have their part to perform. Recent events have often shown that the principles of democratic government in trade unions need reasserting and making good. The complaints of trade unionists themselves that ballots are improperly conducted, either with insufficient voters or under some forms of moral compulsion, are so numerous that there is probably some foundation for them. If there be any truth in these allegations it is not surprising that labour leaders and employers should both be driven to com-

54 RECONSTRUCTION: ECONOMICS

plain, on the one hand of lack of discipline and sectionalism on the part of their followers, and, on the other, of compacts broken and industrial treaties disavowed.

We believe that trade unionism has it in its power to become one of the best forces in the country, essential to labour, valuable to employers, and necessary to the proper conduct of industry as a whole. But we do not believe that it, any more than any other organisation of men or of employers, should be put above the law, and we believe that now that it has obtained (by its sheer deserts) its rightfu' place in the counsels of industry and the nation, it should recognise this fact, and be content to see the Trades Disputes Act modified in order to set this matter right. Let us recognise at once that no party is powerful enough to compel this alteration. But it is none the less important on that account, and the rectification of this at the hands of the trade unions themselves would do more to win for them public confidence than anything they could gain by the retention of this superlegal supremacy.

After the war the Government is pledged to restore the trade union regulations which have been temporarily suspended. This undertaking was specific, and must be scrupulously redeemed, unless those who

hold the pledge are freely prepared to release the Government from its discharge. In many directions post-war conditions are likely to demand new methods, and it may well be possible, with the consent of all concerned, to find means to secure the rightful protection of the interests of labour more satisfactorily than by regulations restricting output and ultimately hampering national recovery. From various quarters, official and other, suggestions have been put forward with the object of associating workpeople more closely with the conditions and management of the enterprise in which they are employed. But before everything a spirit of confidence between employer and employed is indispensable if either a wiser policy of the trade unions of the future or any measures of fiscal or industrial reconstruction are to bear full fruit. Is it too much to hope that the same ideals which are prompting men to search for other means than war of composing international differences may also eventually guide them to the discovery of a more excellent way of dealing with industrial disputes than strikes and lock-outs?

A brief reference will not be out of place here to the matter of post-war taxation, and to the point of view from which it

56 RECONSTRUCTION: ECONOMICS

would seem desirable that it should be approached.

Approximate figures have already been given as to the probable sum for which provision will have to be made in the annual budget. It is not proposed to discuss the question of including an indemnity from Germany in the Allied peace terms. For such a demand, in repayment of some proportion, at all events, of the monetary sacrifices made, both justice and reason furnish ample ground. But, in any case, the population of these islands will be inevitably called upon to shoulder a very heavy financial burden.

There is not likely to be any dispute about the general principle that this burden should be distributed in accordance, as nearly as may be, with the capacity of individuals or classes of property to bear it. The broadest shoulders must bear the greatest share. Differences of opinion are more likely to emerge as to alternative methods of taxation that may be, or have been, suggested, and as to the point at which taxation becomes so onerous as to act as discouragement to that thrift and enterprise, individual and national, upon which reconstruction must depend.

It is essential to offer every inducement to the rapid expansion and development of

industry, and in this relation it may be well to say a word about the proposal to meet the situation by a levy on capital.

There never was a time at which there existed a greater need for the wise employment of every penny of capital at our command in the reconstruction of our industries, buildings, plant and machinery, and in the development of new resources hitherto neglected or inadequately explored. The permanent or temporary displacement of a large part of the capital available for these purposes would be to destroy one of the essential means by which alone they can be served, and the effect of such a step would be to destroy, or indefinitely postpone, the principal hope for the future trade and prosperity of the country.

Moreover, in advocating a capital levy many people seem to assume that all the wealth of the country is represented in the form of stocks and shares which would make the operation of such a levy a simple operation. It is not clear how it is proposed to deal with the capital which is not invested in that form, with land, for example, or with the stocks of merchandise in the hands of the smaller traders. What practicable plan can be devised for taking toll of these without crippling them and at the same time throwing their assets on a

58 RECONSTRUCTION: ECONOMICS

depreciated market where all would be sellers and none buyers ?

It is also difficult to see in what way such a scheme could operate in practice without great injustice as between different individuals who might be affected by it.

Take the case of two men, one of whom, A, a bachelor, has enjoyed an income of £1,000 a year and saved nothing; and, the other, B, who has had an income of £750 a year, and, being married with a family, has saved £2,500. This saving has been induced by his family responsibilities. It has been a matter of constant and strenuous self-denial. Many self-indulgences and legitimate pleasures have been denied for what all will admit to be an unselfish and meritorious object. With what justice could those small savings be raided, with the consequence that the thrift of B would be penalised, and the extravagance of A (negatively) rewarded ?

Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely.

Indeed, if it were intended that taxation should be accompanied by injustice, that it should be capricious, and should do all that unwise legislation can do in discouraging industry and thrift, no better weapon could be forged than a levy on capital.

Even those who would feel such a levy but slightly, and to whom it would in effect matter little, must continue to emphasise on all occasions the immense damage which would be done to honest toil and the saving habit by such a policy.

Whatever policy be adopted, the situation will strain the resources of the country to the uttermost. It can only be aggravated by resort to methods that can hardly avoid ending in grave damage to the country's financial credit and stability, apart from which a successful solution of the problem is impossible.

V

RECONSTRUCTION: 2. AGRICULTURE

ATTENTION has already been directed to the principal results produced by half a century of *laissez-faire* applied to agriculture, but they will repay more detailed consideration.

The Report of the Agricultural Policy Subcommittee of the Reconstruction Committee has been recently made public (Cd. 9079, 1918), and it is to be hoped that it may receive the careful study it deserves. The Report is based upon an exhaustive enquiry, conducted by public men recognised to speak with exceptional authority upon their subject, who are primarily concerned to state the facts of agricultural history, and let those facts prove their own conclusions. According to their investigations, between 1860 and 1914 the acreage under wheat fell from over four million acres to just under two. In 1860 the country produced nearly double the quantity of wheat that it imported from abroad; by 1914 the proportion of home-grown wheat is nearly down to one-fifth of the total wheat consumed. The figures of land under

DECLINE OF AGRICULTURE 61

arable cultivation tell their own story. In rather more than forty years (1870-1914) the land under arable cultivation sank by more than four and a half million acres, the diminution in a single year (1913) being no less than two hundred and seventy-seven thousand acres.

The result on the rural population was inevitable and simultaneous. The census of 1871 showed, roughly, two and a half million men of all descriptions engaged in agriculture in the United Kingdom; that of 1911, forty years later, showed less than two million. Similarly, the two hundred and forty-five thousand women engaged on the land in 1871 had dwindled to just over one hundred thousand by 1911. Thus, taken together, the working agricultural population of the United Kingdom actually declined by something between half and three-quarters of a million during the very period that the general population of the country increased by almost fourteen millions.

It is wearisome to recite figures, especially when they all point to the same conclusions. Looking back from the vantage-ground of 1918, it is easy to see that these conclusions flowed as naturally as water flows downhill, from the policy adopted in 1846. It was then decided that cheap food was in all

62 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

circumstances the paramount consideration for a nation of which the industrial development was in full swing, regardless of the consequences such a course entailed on agriculture. It is no doubt true that the full effect of adopting a policy of unrestricted free imports was not at the time appreciated. The development of cheap corn growing upon the virgin soils of new continents, and the conversion of steam power to the task of bringing this new corn by rail and sea, into unequal competition in British markets with the home-grown produce: the effect of these and other forces in 1846 was still remote and unforeseen. Moreover, up to 1870 such wheat as was required to supplement the home-grown supply came chiefly from Northern Europe, where the same climatic conditions prevailed as in the British Isles. The result was that in bad seasons the price of imported wheat was substantially the same as that of the home-grown produce, which in such circumstances ruled high. With the entry of North America into the wheat world this situation was radically altered. Different climatic conditions often produced good crops in America, while seasons were bad in Europe. And therefore after 1870, when, as it happened, a considerable proportion of the seasons were unfavourable, the effect of

bad seasons was exaggerated by falling prices. The consequence was that the average price of wheat fell from over 50s. a quarter in the seventies to 32s. 10d. by 1885 and 22s. 10d. in 1894, while in 1895 a quarter of oats was sold for 14s. 6d.

During the long years of peace that the country enjoyed, the danger of increasing dependence on supplies from abroad for the staple articles of food was ignored. Manufacturers saw in cheap food the simplest and most obvious means of securing a plentiful supply of cheap labour for their industries. To the operatives the most immediate remedy for low wages seemed a policy which appeared to promise an abundance of cheap food. The combination of industrial employers and employed against just treatment for British agriculture was too strong, until again another European war forced the nation to choose between national starvation and relearning the lessons of its last great struggle against Napoleon. It thus happened that during the period following the effective operation of the new system, the damage that was likely to result to agriculture was, at first, imperfectly apprehended, and when it became actual was generally discounted as the inevitable accompaniment of urban and industrial evolution.

64 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

From 1875 onwards the condition of the agricultural industry gave cause for increasing anxiety. The effect of American competition, which had begun to be acutely felt a few years earlier, was aggravated by bad seasons and stock diseases. Two Royal Commissions were appointed to investigate and report, but the evils which called them into being were not likely to be cured by Government inquiries unsupported by substantial legislative assistance. All classes concerned in agriculture suffered. The landowner was compelled to watch the depreciation of his property, estimated in evidence before the Royal Commission of 1893 by the Chairman of the Inland Revenue as a decline between 1875 and 1894 of no less than 50 per cent. in capital value. As a class, the owners of land gave what assistance they could to their tenants by way of remission of rent, and, in default of being able to find farm tenants, took the land into hand and themselves carried on its cultivation at a loss.

Farmers turned more and more to the new methods of grass instead of arable farming, which some had already adopted before the years of extreme depression, as exposing them to smaller risk of bad seasons and financial loss. Instead of receiving encouragement to put as much as possible

into the land in order to get as much from it as it could give, farmers were driven to scan jealously every item of their expenditure, lest they should find themselves throwing good money after bad, and end in bankruptcy, as had done so many of their fellows. Figures have been quoted showing the shrinkage of land cultivated as arable, but it would be to paint the picture unduly favourably to suppose that all the land that passed out of arable cultivation was converted into good pasture. Much of it was merely left to itself, ceased to know the plough, and in a few years had ceased to have any agricultural value at all. Numbers of the labourers who had been employed on the land found their employment gone, and left it to seek their livelihood elsewhere. Those who continued in their old occupation did so at wages which either remained stationary or were reduced, while wages in all other occupations were gradually increasing.

By 1906 the tide had begun to turn, and agricultural produce and stock were beginning to fetch better prices both at home and abroad; but as the Report points out (p. 16), with the exception of a single year (1912), the conversion of arable land to pasture was still continuing. With great justification the Committee directs attention

66 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

to the significance of this fact. Indeed, this single fact is eloquent of the havoc wrought by the conditions under which the industry had been carried on, not only upon the industry itself, but, even more important, upon what may be termed the " morale " of those engaged in it. Even when the situation was changing in their favour, as it was in the ten years before the war, the generality of farmers were reluctant to embark again upon the kind of cultivation that had brought ruin to the preceding generation. There were, no doubt, exceptions in the shape of men who had greater faith in the future of their business, and were not afraid to back their opinion with their capital. Many of these did well out of arable farming, and deserve every credit for their enterprise and industry. But it must be remembered that, whatever might be intelligent anticipations, there was no sort of certainty that at any moment a fresh depression of prices would not come to destroy both the faith and the resources that had been invested on the strength of it. Many of the individuals concerned had suffered personally; the younger men had been brought up under the shadow of the dark days. Moreover, a change in the custom of farm cultivation is not to be effected in a day; many of the new genera-

tion had not been brought up to arable farming, and, by the time the improvement in agriculture began to tell, land that had been sown down had grown into useful grass and was doing well for its occupiers by stock-raising and dairying.

There is small cause for wonder that with the whole weight of recent experience behind him the ordinary farmer preferred to adhere to the side of reduced risk, caution, and economy. It is easy for the outside critic, whose purse has not been affected, to find fault with the farmers of that day for timidity and lack of enterprise in not taking advantage at once of better times. The impartial student will rather lean to endorse the opinion of Sir Daniel Hall, the Permanent Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, in his preface to *Agriculture after the War*, that "Before one attaches any blame to the current race of farmers one must consider the extraordinary crises through which they have passed in the last thirty years, without any attention or assistance from the State: then one will be more inclined to praise them for having contrived to remain in existence at all." The same might be said with equal truth of landowners who had had to provide for the maintenance and upkeep of their property out of purely agricultural income.

68 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

It is not possible to say how long it would have taken to overcome these doubts and gloomy recollections. The war has made unprofitable the calculations of what might have been the relation between the world's producing and consuming power, and the necessity of self-preservation has forced the nation to recognise the facts and take immediate action on them. From several quarters it was made apparent that victory or defeat depended as vitally upon the restoration of agricultural home production as upon the achievements of the armed forces of the nation. Foreign supplies were imperilled by enemy submarines, and by continuing to import from elsewhere food that our own land could grow we were both adding to the burden of our financial indebtedness abroad and withholding shipping when every ton was imperatively required for other purposes. In these circumstances Parliament passed the Corn Production Act, by which certain base prices for cereal crops were guaranteed, the machinery was created for assisting and, when need be, enforcing the highest possible production from the soil, and, lastly, for securing to the agricultural labourer a decent remuneration for his labour.

Owing to prices ruling higher than the guaranteed prices of the Act, no liability

under the guarantee has fallen on the taxpayer. It is nevertheless certain that in face of many vexatious restrictions on the agricultural industry, and in spite of the compulsory powers of the Corn Production Act, the excellent results of the last two years would not have been achieved unless the farmer had been assured that at last the nation was prepared to stand behind him if he did his best to feed it. When all allowances have been made for special circumstances and cases, the broad sequence of cause and effect holds good. A successful and enterprising agriculture demands confidence, and confidence cannot exist without security. Insecurity, on the other hand, breeds failure and stagnation. Without security the capital of the landowner will be sparingly invested in the land and will seek a more safe return from other fields. Without security the farmer will favour whatever will enable him to make a safe living, and will be content to limit his income if at the same time he is limiting his risks. With the possible recurrence of the 1894-95 prices, when wheat and oats were respectively 22s. 10d. and 14s. 6d. a quarter, it is out of the question for the agricultural industry to offer adequate reward in wages or other conditions of life to the labour it employs. These are no problematic con-

70 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

clusions, but facts which lie within the memory and experience of many practical men to-day. And because for the time being conditions have been transformed, we should not make the mistake of supposing that the same conditions would not, if they were repeated, produce the same results.

If this general argument wins assent, there are good reasons for insisting after the war on the necessity of a new agricultural policy. The question of national security in war-time will remain important as long as the world is subject to the chance of war. The future, as we hope, may hold in store the abolition of armed strife between civilised nations, but wise men will not be blind to the difficulties that must be overcome before this ideal can be realised. With the aid of science and invention it is possible, in the judgment of the Admiralty, that these islands may be even more vulnerable to enemy attacks upon their sea-borne traffic. The considered opinion of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on this matter, as given to the Committee to whose inquiries frequent reference has been made, may be quoted in its entirety:

“ The submarine attack on the overseas food-supply of the United Kingdom has thrown a great additional strain upon the Navy in the present war. The Navy has,

so far, been able to keep this submarine attack in check, but no means have yet been discovered to render sea-borne traffic immune from attack. Consequently any effective steps to make this country less dependent upon the importation of the necessities of life in the present war would result in a great reduction of anxiety.

*The certain development of the submarine may render such vessels still more formidable as weapons of attack against sea-borne commerce in a future war,** and no justification exists for assuming that anything approaching entire immunity can be obtained. Therefore, the experience of the present war leads to the conclusion that any measures which resulted in rendering the United Kingdom less dependent on the importation of food-stuffs during the period of a future war, and so in reducing the volume of sea-borne traffic, would greatly relieve the strain upon the Navy and add immensely to the national security."

Of hardly less importance than permanently safeguarding the country against the potential danger to its food-supplies are the domestic advantages that spring from a healthy and prosperous agriculture.

These are all comprised in the reversal of the process that for fifty years has been emptying the country of its population, to the prejudice of the physique and political

* The italics are ours.

72 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

stability of the nation. The low level of agricultural wages, and the lack of opportunity and interest in the country, have not unnaturally failed to hold their own against the better opportunity and more attractive conditions of the towns.

The Corn Production Act has established the principle of a minimum wage for able-bodied agricultural labourers, and the decisions of the Statutory Boards erected under the Act have made, and are making, general rates of wages which were already being approached in many parts of the country by the working of economic forces. Nobody who has a vision of a regenerated countryside will regret the passing of the old agricultural wages. Although it has always been possible to adduce cases in which, by thrift and industry, an agricultural labourer has brought up a large family on 16s. a week, and saved enough to better his own position, such an achievement was only possible because the cash wages were supplemented by various payments in kind and other advantages varying according to circumstances and country customs, and the occupation of cottages let at uneconomic rents. A system of part payments in kind operates to the advantage of the labourer, especially in times of high prices, and should not be lightly interfered with on analogies

drawn from dissimilar conditions. Un-economic cottage rents, even in ordinary times, were a real obstacle to rural housing, and the increased cost of building and the weight of taxation bid fair to make cottage building a prohibitive undertaking for private individuals. But even if by State assistance these difficulties can be partially surmounted, good wages and housing are only parts of the whole rural problem. Genuine and continuous effort must be made to increase both the opportunity and the personal interest in the results of their labour of those who earn their living by working on the land. In some cases it is the habit of farmers to-day definitely to associate their labourers in the fortunes of the farm by giving them, in one form or another, in addition to their wages, a share of the profits made by it. On large, grouped holdings it may be possible to work the business on a company basis, in which the labourers can take up shares and receive a proportionate share of the dividend declared. Local circumstances and individual temperaments are of infinite diversity, and what may be possible on one farm or in one district may be hopelessly unsuitable elsewhere. All that we wish to press is that employers and employed both stand to gain from any scheme which gives to each

74 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

a direct stake in the industry on which both alike depend. But it is of importance, if such schemes profess to be business propositions, that they should be so in fact as well as in profession, and should steer clear of the dangers of charity in disguise.

The same thing is applicable to small-holdings and allotments. It is futile to raise hopes of planting everybody who wishes it on the land, when every sane man knows that, unless regard be had not only to finance but to characteristics, both of soil and individuals, nothing but disaster can follow for all concerned. It is probable too that the farming of the future will demand the application of more rather than less capital for its successful prosecution, and this fact, if true, will complicate the problem. It is right to recognise the pitfalls, but not to exaggerate them. From the point of view of agriculture, as well as on wider national grounds, it is pre-eminently desirable that the number of people personally concerned with the prosperity of agriculture and horticulture, and acquainted at first hand with their difficulties, should be as large as possible. The town dweller who has had the vegetables on his allotment destroyed by a local hailstorm will be better able to appreciate the weather risks to which the business of a

farmer is perpetually exposed. An undoubted weakness of the agricultural industry is the class distinction that too often prevails between the large farmers and the rest of the village community. In many cases it is here that lies one of the most solid obstacles to the infusion of new vitality into village life. It is more profitable to search for remedies than to waste effort in the apportionment of blame for a state of things which is the legacy of years and of past agricultural neglect. But we are convinced that it is in the interests of farmers themselves to help bridge the gulf where it exists by helping with good-will to meet the reasonable and proper desires of villagers to become themselves small farmers. For these reasons it is to be hoped that public authorities, private landowners, and tenant farmers, will be ready, each in their own sphere, to give sympathetic assistance to the extension on sound lines of the smallholdings and allotment movements.

Something has been said in another chapter about education from the agricultural point of view and no attempt has been made here to do more than sketch the broad outlines of the agricultural situation. Enough has been said to indicate the reasons for which we think it the duty of

76 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

the State to recognise that agriculture and its fortunes are a concern of vital importance to itself. Every one of the subjects we have referred to, the amount of food to be grown at home, the prospects of making agriculture a profitable investment for capital, brains and enterprise, the establishment of such wages and other conditions as may stem the flow of rural population from the country districts, the reconstruction of village life, the successful extension of allotment and smallholdings—each and all of these will be found in the end to depend on the hard economic fact of the ratio between the cost of production and the selling price of agricultural produce.

As to cost of production, the practice and experience of foreign countries can be studied with advantage. Science, machinery, co-operative trading, education of those owning and occupying land to take the fullest advantage of modern methods, must all be called in aid. It is probably true that the last three years have seen an increasing readiness among farmers to take advantage of the scientific knowledge available through the research work of agricultural colleges and other institutions. But the numbers who do so are still limited. It is astonishing, when the best technical advice on the chemical properties of the

soil, for instance, is only waiting to be asked, that many more farmers should not think it worth while to write a penny (or, let us hope, some day again a halfpenny) post card to obtain it. This shows the need for improvement on both sides. The farmer must come to see that rule-of-thumb farming is not always or necessarily the last word, and the scientist must be imbued with a missionary determination to link his science in practical form to the working of every farm. But there is a limit to what can be accomplished by such means, and investigation of each aspect of the subject only emphasises what has been said above as to the need for reasonable certainty of a fair selling price.

It is not intended here to discuss the relative merits or demerits of guaranteed prices or of a duty system. Justification for either in a national policy, even if it were confined to agriculture, is the fact that the prosperity of agriculture is, as we have tried to show, the very keystone of national security. The nation must be convinced, and led to act on the conviction, that its interest in agriculture is more immediate than in that of any other industry, and that it is short-sighted folly to neglect it. If the nation so frames its policy as to give stability to its agricultural industry, it can

78 RECONSTRUCTION: AGRICULTURE

insist on such use of the land, by owners and occupiers, as will secure the maximum production of food-stuffs, further improve the condition and status of the agricultural population, and in so doing promote the greatest national advantage.

VI

RECONSTRUCTION: 3 HOUSING: DRINK: EDUCATION

THE lines upon which the State should treat matters commonly included under the comprehensive term of social reform will be apparent from much that has been already written. Every reform costs money, and the provision of money depends, in the last resort upon national and individual industry. It is evident, therefore, that the economic and financial policy which favoured regularity of employment at good wages, and which encouraged individual thrift, would be in itself the greatest social reform imaginable. As a general principle it is safe to say that the State will secure better results by encouraging men to better themselves, and by doing everything it can to make it possible for them to do so, than by superimposing reforms, however excellent in themselves, from the top. But those who hold this view most strongly must remember that war conditions will not come to an end with the conclusion of hostilities, and that in several directions it will certainly be necessary to

80 RECONSTRUCTION: HOUSING

invoke the organisation of State action to meet them. There is little difference of opinion as to such necessity in the case of housing. There is a present shortage of working-class houses for England and Wales alone of something like 400,000, and this figure is increasing with every year the war continues. This actual and prospective shortage, serious enough, is made worse by the fact that it does not include the large number of houses which every sanitary authority is anxious to demolish as unfit for human habitation, but as to which their hands are tied by the fact that the only alternative is the street. Even this state of things is further aggravated on the one hand by inflated values, nearly doubling the cost of labour and material and complicating the question of economic rents, and on the other by the migrations of population which have resulted from the disorganisation of the industrial life of the country. After the war labour and material may, in addition to being expensive, be difficult to obtain, and it is no easy matter to forecast the drift of population when the production of war munitions again gives place to ordinary industry. In these circumstances the private builder whose business during the war has been practically suspended, and who already before the

war had been frightened by legislation, is not likely, at all events for some time to come, to be able again to provide the great bulk of houses that are required.

The difficulties confronting those responsible for housing policy are numerous and obstinate, and will be found to apply generally both to industrial and agricultural districts. From almost any angle, success or failure in the treatment of this problem of housing will mark success or failure in the whole work of post-war reconstruction. Nothing but the strongest determination will overcome these difficulties, and this must spring from the recognition that housing stands almost alone in its potential influence upon the future of the nation.

It is by a sure instinct that the country is resolved to fight the war, if need be, to the bitter end, in order to do everything that humanly can be done to ensure that the untold sacrifices exacted from the men and women of to-day shall not be again exacted to-morrow from their children. The same natural instinct prompts it to demand concentration of effort upon the task of rebuilding the national life and repairing the waste of war through the rising generation, on whose character and physical health the future of the nation hangs. The working of this new spirit, for

82 RECONSTRUCTION: HOUSING

it is nothing less, may be discerned in the recent Education Act, in the public resentment at what is commonly thought to be departmental obstruction to the proposed Ministry of Health, and in the growing recognition that the young life of a country is its greatest wealth. Not for nothing has the country been taught by the experience of the medical examination of its manhood for military service. The number of unfit recruits who have been accepted, the more than one million men who have been rejected, are eloquent testimony to the waste of human material in bygone days. Enquiry and experience combine to prove that by nothing is the health of the England of the future more vitally affected for good or ill than by housing. Good houses mean the possibility of home life, happiness, and health; bad houses spell squalor, drink, disease, immorality, and crime, and in the end demand hospitals, prisons, and asylums in which we seek to hide away the human derelicts of society that are largely the result of society's own neglect. In 1917 an enquiry was made by a Royal Commission into the causes of industrial unrest, and no less than seven out of the eight subcommittees by which the enquiry was conducted recorded their opinion that insufficient and bad housing was one of the factors

responsible for unrest. We do not pretend to discuss the detailed merits and demerits of the Government scheme to meet this situation, but we would emphasise some of the considerations by which the necessary examination of it should be informed. The practical difficulties in the way of building after the war have driven the State to recognise, as it has through the President of the Local Government Board, that housing is a responsibility that the nation must bear in partnership with the local authority. It is also necessary and right that the State should share the financial loss, for some years inevitable, involved in action to meet a national necessity. But in the interests of sound administration two things are of importance. One is that State assistance should be given on such terms as to stimulate local enterprise, and at the same time provide adequate incentive to efficiency in local management. The other is that every regard should be had to the desirability of encouraging private enterprise to enter the field—and this applies to the country just as much as to the towns.

But, when all is said, the criterion of Government proposals will be whether or not they will in fact produce the houses. These we must have, and that quickly, as soon as labour and material can be released

84 RECONSTRUCTION: DRINK

for their construction. There are some reforms which are desirable, but which may have to be postponed to wait their turn, and which must depend upon ways and means. Housing is not of these. It stands in a wholly different category, and financial prudence must, if need be, be strained to meet the situation. An energetic housing policy is the condition precedent to a successful attack upon the forces of ill-health and crime. It is almost certainly the golden key to half the problems of intemperance.

It is not surprising that many people, deeply impressed by the havoc wrought by excessive drinking, have been driven to favour total legislative prohibition of alcoholic drink. The motive for such a decision must command respect, but we cannot subscribe to the conclusion. After all, the pleasures of drink, rightly enjoyed, are perfectly moral and legitimate, and can claim the highest scriptural sanction. The right enjoyment of it, as opposed to its abuse, is a question of individual self-control. Moreover besides the effect already referred to of bad housing and overcrowding, the evils of intemperance are fostered by a variety of causes, such as lack of intellectual and other interests and want of opportunity for open-air pursuits and

healthy recreation. This aspect of the matter was tersely put by a Manchester operative who gave the explanation of why he got drunk so regularly that "it was the shortest way out of Manchester." It would seem, therefore, that the evils we deplore are due in the main to deficient self-control, aggravated by bad environment. This last it is within the power of the State to do something to improve, but the first will remain to be decided by the extent to which men and women can truly become masters of themselves. Prohibition, on the other hand, would seem to seek to substitute for this the artificial barrier of the law, not likely, if exerted in opposition to human nature, to be very efficacious. On general principles it cannot be agreed that this is the remedy that is required.

At the same time it is obvious that the drink trade is of so exceptional a character, and the evils that it has in its power to inflict are so serious and far-reaching, that it is impossible for the State to treat the sale of its products with the same indifference as it treats, for example, the sale of boots, of which everybody is welcome to buy to the utmost of his desire and the limits of his purse. Valuable as is liberty, an individual's exercise of it cannot be permitted to prejudice the lives of others.

The question of State purchase has been much discussed of late, and has appealed to certain sections of opinion. Opponents of the proposal have expressed their view that ownership by the State of the drink business would be in itself immoral and indefensible. We cannot take this view. Starting from the assumption that it is not drink itself, but its abuse, that is the evil, we cannot feel that there is anything in the business of its production or distribution that would necessarily debase or contaminate the State. Rather it could be urged that the very danger of the trade was the strongest argument for its retention in public instead of private hands. The question, therefore, presents itself as one of mere expediency, and if this view be correct much depends upon whether such a proposition was financially sound or not. It could only be effected on a basis of fair purchase and compensation, and from a business point of view it is open to the general objections that can be adduced against State-managed industry. On the whole it seems doubtful whether any great social advantage would be derived from it which cannot be obtained by a judicious system of control. The number of houses, hours of sale, quality of beer—these are the points to which the State's attention can be profitably directed.

CHARACTER OF PUBLIC-HOUSES 87

While it is not suggested that State control need be as stringent when normal times return as it has necessarily been during the period of the war, we can learn from the results, generally satisfactory, that war conditions have produced. It should be the object of true reform to provide facilities for the purchase of decent drink within reasonable reach of those who desire it, without thrusting temptation in the shape of unnecessary public-houses before their eyes.

It is also worth making every effort to improve the character of many of the places where drink is sold. Such attempts as that associated with the Public House Trust Movement to make public-houses places of healthy social recreation, where non-intoxicants as well as intoxicants could be readily obtained, are wholly good. There is much to be learnt from the methods in vogue in other countries of the Continent. The French restaurant, open as it is to the street, makes it easier for public opinion to exert itself against the excesses of those who wish to drink not wisely but too well. Further, if our conception of temperance—viz., that there is nothing inherently bad in moderate drinking—is accepted, there is no reason why public-houses should be screened off from the public view, and

back entrances provided for the special purpose that their customers may enter unobserved.

In conclusion, it is worth saying something about the political aspect, and pressing the importance of dealing with the thing on its real merits and not according to the dictates of supposed party interest and advantage. No political party can do its work if it is shackled to any sectional interest, however powerful or however patriotic, least of all if it be an interest like the brewing interest, which affects in a particular way the health of the body politic. But if there was any truth before the war in the charge that the Tory party was in too close political affinity with the trades connected with the manufacture and sale of drink, it is no less true that the Radical party, in zeal for temperance reform, gave insufficient weight to the demands of human nature and the requirements of fair dealing with what was, for better or worse, a trade established and pursued with the direct sanction and concurrence of the State. Experience of war-time administration of this matter has shown us that real good can only be accomplished by the exorcising of the party spirit, and by approaching it with the single desire to recognise facts and make the best of them. Let us recognise that the public-

house is the working-man's club, and that the ordinary man is perfectly entitled to drink if he be so minded, and let us then devote our best efforts to enable him to gratify a legitimate desire in such fashion as will not react unfavourably upon himself, his family, or the community.

Reference has been already made to the driving force exerted on the minds of the nation by the desire to see an improvement of the material conditions under which the new race of citizens are to be born and brought up in the world.

The reception accorded to the recent Education Act in Parliament and the country is sufficient proof that there is substantial unanimity as to the need for the greatest possible measure of educational development. It is too soon to forecast accurately the results that are likely to accrue from the working of that measure, but at least we may with profit indicate the factors on which real progress must depend. The elements of the educational problem can be simply stated. They are to secure for the children of to-day, who will be the men and women of to-morrow, such training, physical, intellectual, religious, as may fit them to make the best use of their own lives, and, in doing so, to serve the nation to the best advantage.

90 RECONSTRUCTION: EDUCATION

It is obvious that if something like this be the object of our endeavour, the mere acquisition of encyclopædic knowledge will fall short. Valuable as may be the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, we believe that, speaking generally, it is as a means to an end that its main worth will be found. It is a dangerous delusion to suppose that happiness or progress, whether of individuals or communities, depends upon the degree of knowledge to which they can lay claim, independently of the purpose to which education has taught them to apply it. As the best teachers recognise, the fullest use must be made of the children's human interest by presenting teaching in such a form that it works in alliance with, and is quickened by, those interests, rather than as too often in irksome competition with them. The fact that up till recently it was not uncommon to find boys and girls who had forgotten how to read and write within a few years of leaving school shows a lack of cohesion between school and daily life.

No attempt can be made here to define in detail the subject-matter of an educational curriculum. The layman only knows in broad outline the results he wants, and must rely upon the educational expert for advice as to how they can be obtained. An educational curriculum is only a part—

an important part, but still only a part—of the whole matter. The value that will be derived from the best curriculum that could be devised by wit of man will depend, above all, upon the living personality of the teacher by whom the child is taught, and upon the degree to which it is possible to give real educational opportunity to those who are qualified and anxious to take advantage of it.

These, then, are the three main points for our consideration. What should be taught; how children may best profit by what is taught; and, lastly, how we may hope to secure the best persons for the task of teaching. Initiative, self-reliance, judgment, character—these are among the chief ends of education; and one of the principal tests by which the State's success in the educational field must always be examined is the extent to which it has resulted in fostering these qualities. It is the business of education in its widest sense to fit future citizens for the duties citizenship imposes.

If this be the spirit in which the service of education is undertaken, there will be no conflict about the necessity of affording vastly increased facilities for technical education of all kinds. Every day we are learning more of the services that, in relation both to industry and agriculture,

92 RECONSTRUCTION: EDUCATION

applied science has it in its power to offer. From the other side, education and its technical application afford a way of escape from the tendency of modern industry to convert human workers into automatic minders of machines, as mechanical as the machine at which they work. By education we may fairly hope that industry may be organised efficiently without the sacrifice of the humanity of those engaged in it. Moreover as compared with the other great nations of the world, we must admit that we have hitherto undervalued the importance of the more advanced technical education, and in many directions we have suffered seriously in consequence.

There is another kindred subject, our treatment of which has hitherto left much to be desired. It is a common boast of a certain class of educational enthusiasts that the Education Act of 1902 provided a complete ladder by which the intelligent child might climb from the elementary school to the highest honours of the University. In theory this is incontestable, but we suspect that in practice the ladder-climbing has been limited. Nor is it possible to dispose wholly of the question by asserting that the limited extent to which advantage has been taken of higher educa-

tional facilities merely proves that there were no other children capable of benefiting by them. What it would rather seem to us to suggest would be that the rewards of intellectual effort at the different stages have been neither sufficiently numerous or attractive. It must not be forgotten that, as things are, it is no light matter for poor parents to encourage their sons to go in for scholarships. Preparation for examinations demands study and time—withdrawn, perhaps, from directly productive occupation—competition is probably severe and the risk of failure, with consequent waste of money and effort, is considerable. Only the prospect of substantial reward will suffice to overcome these difficulties, and, both from the point of view of parents and their children, there is need of great development in this direction before we can feel that we have really secured equality of educational opportunity. In such development also there is need of great variety, in order that a due relation may be established between higher education and the life for which it attempts to provide the training.

In this connexion we would say something of the agricultural aspect of this question. We recognise the force of the arguments against a stereotyped vocational

94 RECONSTRUCTION: EDUCATION

training in all cases, at an age when for many children it is hardly desirable or possible that their line of life should be irrevocably decided. We have tried to emphasise throughout the importance of bearing in view the effect on general mental training of every stage of education, as well as the specific subjects that it is sought to teach. But we think that there is solid ground for the complaint that has been frequently urged against our educational system from the agricultural standpoint. A common criticism of education in many country districts is that it turns out boys and girls capable of becoming clerks or shop-assistants, and that it has thus tended to stimulate rather than check the flow of country population to the towns.

Let it be at once conceded that there were also many other influences—and those more powerful—at work in this direction, for even a perfect system of agricultural education to have been able alone to arrest the process. It may also be agreed that the infusion into the towns of the fresh blood and stock of the countryside has been a healthy counterpoise to the evil effects of urban and industrial conditions. But we believe that there are grounds of national interest which outweigh this last consideration. While acknowledging the importance

of infusing country blood into town populations, let us not forget the necessity of keeping the country itself healthy and robust. The essential importance of the country districts as producers of food for the community, the peculiar contribution that the country mind has to make to national counsels, both furnish strong arguments in favour of doing everything that we can to redress the balance that for the last half century has tilted so heavily against the country.

We have sketched elsewhere the economic lines on which the subject must be dealt with "if we decide that on national grounds we must do everything we can to make agricultural life attractive, but we must not neglect the influence of education. At the present moment, in spite of much pious expression of opinion for some time past, we believe it to be true to say that much of the education in rural parts of England is from this point of view quite inadequate. There is little doubt that by a well conceived and administered system of agricultural education the children of the country districts could be brought to realise something of the infinite variety of interest by which their lives are constantly surrounded. If this could be accomplished the country would no longer be, as it is too

96 RECONSTRUCTION: EDUCATION

often to-day, a dull, grey place, in unpleasing contrast to the gas-lamps and cinema-shows of the towns. Furthermore, this education, in co-operation with other forces, would tend to raise the whole intellectual level of the agricultural industry, and show it to be one that required and would repay the best brains that could be employed upon it. There is a great opportunity here for the new continuation schools, and it is not extravagant to hope that if a serious attempt be made to seize it, much of the teaching given to the children in the schools will have its effect upon the land their parents own or cultivate.

But whatever efforts towards improvement may be made by careful selection of subjects to be taught and by provision of liberal encouragement for all who can take advantage of it, real education remains something that is vitally alive, and success or failure in it depends, and will always depend, upon what we describe above as the third element of the problem—that is, upon the teachers. This is the foundation upon which everything else must rest, and it is, therefore, of the first importance that the conditions and prospects of the teaching profession should be made attractive enough to enlist the services of the best men and women in the nation. There is no more

important class of Civil Servant than the teachers; they are building, not for to-day, but for to-morrow, and in their hands largely lies the moulding of the character of the next generation of citizens. At every stage in the career of the teacher, provision for preliminary training, salaries, and retiring pensions, we should keep well in the forefront of our mind the responsibility of the office to which we are inviting him.

Nothing has yet been said about what is generally known as the religious question in education. This is not because we underestimate the importance of it; for, as we have repeatedly affirmed, no possession of knowledge can compensate for failure to form character, and by no agency can character be formed more surely than by that of religious influence. The question of religious teaching, therefore, is not one upon which the State, in our view, can afford to remain neutral. It is impossible to be satisfied with the existing state of things.

Apart from the logical injustice of a system under which it is not possible for children to receive in school the religious teaching of the faith professed by their parents, there is good evidence to make us doubt the results that it is producing. The almost unanimous testimony of chaplains

98 RECONSTRUCTION: EDUCATION

serving at the Front as to the religious ignorance of the manhood of the country may indeed mark the failure of the Churches in their sphere, but it no less surely stands as condemnation of the methods we have adopted for years for giving religious education in the school. We do not wish to condone what may very often have been left undone by the Churches in the matter of religious teaching, nor acquit them of their portion of blame for the result. But we believe that for the State there will ultimately be found to be a choice only between two alternatives. The State must decide whether or not it intends to retain religious teaching as part of its educational requirements. If it does, it will have frankly to take its stand upon the only intelligible principle by which its wishes may be made practically effective, and give generous and unprejudiced support to whatever arrangement may be necessary to enable children to receive religious teaching in school hours according to their parents' creed, at the hands of persons who believe in what they teach. If, on the other hand, the State decides against the retention of religious teaching in the schools, it must content itself with leaving the giving of it outside school hours to the parents and the representatives of the respective denominations.

For many reasons, but especially because we do not think that the State can safely discard any instrument by which it may express a corporate recognition of religion, we should deplore the adoption of the second course. As to the first, we are well aware of the objections that may be urged against it. At the same time, they are not likely to be insuperable, given good-will and a determination to harmonise rather than exaggerate points of difference. The bitterness of old controversies has been happily assuaged, and we would hope that as the war has shown us the power of national unity on the secular side, so it will also succeed no less in bringing home to men of different opinions the tragedy of division and the need of unity on the religious side. It is surely inconceivable that when the vast majority of the nation is anxious to retain religious instruction in elementary education, and when daily experience is reinforcing its necessity, we should be prepared to acquiesce in a system that has failed to produce results, or alternatively be driven to confess defeat, and abandon the attempt to find a more just and satisfactory solution.

EPILOGUE

It is not claimed that the preceding pages contain a new political evangel that is destined to achieve a miraculous regeneration of the world. Such a regeneration can only come through human nature, and human nature is older, greater, and more profound than legislation. The writers, therefore, have endeavoured to approach considerations of policy with the constant recollection that humanity is concerned with laws more eternal than the laws it makes, and moves to an end greater than the material conditions by which it is surrounded. But legislation may do much if in its conception and execution it can borrow the glowing inspiration of that humanity which it is designed to serve. The great opportunity that is now being prepared through the sadness and bitterness of war can only be grasped if we are able to retain and make our own the strength of service and self-sacrifice that has been the bright side of these last years.

To this goal the steps of all our countrymen should be directed. In all quarters

there are men and women who, whether consciously or not, have come to feel something of the beauty of their country's service. It is for such to spare no toil to reflect their own vision before the eyes of those of their fellow-citizens who at present can hardly find this path of service by reason of the dark circumstances of their daily lives. Such a task will claim sacrifice and effort, and it is natural that men should keenly scan the horizon for the clouds that may be seen above it; but to shrink from effort or sacrifice, or to allow our course to be unduly disturbed by anxious questioning, holds but little promise of great achievement. Let us rather approach the years that are coming with faith in our destiny as individuals and as a nation, and with high resolve to be not unworthy of it.

